Wisteria Blossoms

A ShinoMitsu Zine

Thank You

Thank you for downloading Wisteria Blossoms! This project was put together by a group of talented and passionate creatives in their free time. If you like the content presented here, please consider supporting the people behind the scenes.

We hope you enjoy!

All contributors in this project own the rights to their pieces. Attempting to print, sell, or re-distribute this zine for any monetary gain without permission is strictly prohibited.

Table of Contents

1 Tanukified
4 Oykodon93
5 weeenaku
6 Ren Churro

7 Mimi ♥ Lazy Morning, Rushed Afternoon

16 Rain
17 Emmi
18 Tanukified

20 kyaurum ♥ The Stars Will Remain Here

34 Shenbug
36 Tar
37 Moh

47 Breebly ♥ The Panini Press

47 Auritry
48 Ibuki_does_drawing
49 Crisantemo
50 Erbezdiez
52 PropertyOfHog

Lazy Morning, Rushed Afternoon

By Mimi

This time, her canvas is rather big. Mitsuri carefully brings her cup with her trusted brushes and pens and places it on the nearby table, her paint bottles scattered everywhere. To anyone's eyes, her studio is nothing short of a mess, but those who know her well are aware that this mess has a purpose. Everything is in an order only she understands.

Well...

"Where did I put the cobalt-blue paint?"

...Sometimes.

Before she could panic about it, a hand approached from behind. Soft, gentle fingers quietly gripping on her waist as the other hand points far away at the table's corner. Her ears perk up at the sweet, lovingly sound of her partner's voice bringing some clarity in her work.

"It's right there, dear," she says, and her voice carries a hint of teasing despite the tenderness of the near-whisper tone.

"You're here!" Mitsuri almost yells with a smile. On any other day, it takes Shinobu hours to wake up and get going, but that wasn't the case today. How fortunate, for her plans are centered entirely on her girlfriend. "Did you sleep well, love?" she asked, and she lowered her voice after noticing how loud her greeting was.

"I did." Shinobu smiles as she places her chin on Mitsuri's shoulder, her eyes still half closed, following the haze of her dreams. Her arms gently wrap around the artist's waist, pressing their bodies together. "Did you?"

"I-I did!" Mitsuri answers, her cheeks already burning hot. To this day, she still can't get used by the fact her feelings, overwhelming as they can be, are reciprocated. Worse, it seems her partner is head over heels for her, and sometimes even more clingy than Mitsuri could ever be.

"Good," she whispers, gently nuzzling her face into the crook of her neck. It tickles.

Mitsuri chuckles faintly at the giddy feeling and of her girlfriend hugging her from behind, her racing heartbeat slowly calming down as she carefully prepares everything for her new art piece. She already got the set ready; the brushes are all in place and were thoroughly cleaned–*I know, righ*t?–, and her canvas was already prepped last night. All that's left to start with her new work was her muse, slowly falling asleep again as she leans into her.

"Did you eat breakfast?" Mitsuri speaks with the same teasing tone Shinobu used on her.

"I did," she answers, giving her a sidelong glance.

"Hmmm," she ponders, "should I go check?" Mitsuri nudges her.

"No need," Shinobu answers as she steps back, slowly disentangling herself from their embrace. "It took me longer than usual, but I managed to eat it all."

"Is that why you're tired?" Mitsuri turns around to face her, a mix of concern and tenderness in her gaze as she searches for any hint of discomfort in Shinobu's eyes. "You know we don't have to start right away—"

Shinobu gently cups her face, her thumb carefully pressing her lips in her own attempt to shush her girlfriend. "I'm okay, dear. I'm here because I want to do this. Otherwise, I would've slept a little more." She leans her head down, looking at her girlfriend from below with a teasing gaze.

Mitsuri snorts slightly, a short nod agreeing with her. "I guess you're right. You won't waste a chance to sleep a little more," she speaks while grinning, gently holding Shinobu's wrist as she rubs her head against her hand.

Her girlfriend smiles fondly in response, stepping back after their daily pets and hugs session. She crosses her arms, tilting her head as she takes a long stare at the set displayed in front of them. "So," she begins, she seems awake now, "what is the plan this time?"

Right, Mitsuri forgot. From this point on, Shinobu is more than her girlfriend, her partner, her future wife, perhaps. She's her muse, her model. The source of her inspiration in her art, the reason she hasn't quit, the daily motivation that made her notice her full potential in this world. From here on, their relationship merges into her work, her love translated into an empty canvas.

"A portrait," she whispers, her voice filled with affection. "You'll sit here," she walks forward into the set

she arranged for her. There's a chair where Shinobu can sit comfortably, surrounded by different flowers, a white background behind.

"Oh? That's new," she speaks with a fond smile, slowly walking in front of the seat, sitting down while keeping eye contact. "I suppose I'll just have to sit like this, yes?"

"Yes!" Mitsuri grins, her hands clapping together. She's so excited. Every opportunity she gets to draw or paint her gorgeous girlfriend makes her heart leap with joy. The moment she agreed to do another painting as Mitsuri's muse, she was so eager she started working on the set right away.

All the flowers are from their garden. Mitsuri doesn't know much about the meaning of them the way her girlfriend does, but she knows Shinobu is growing them for a reason. Maybe some are poisonous, and if so, they still look pretty enough surrounding her frame, contrasting her pale skin.

In a way, it fits her so well.

Mitsuri sits down, using her pencil to measure the perspective. She shifts slightly, moving her seat to find a better angle. Shinobu looks dazzling under the morning light, the vibrant colors of each flower matching her violet gaze. Their eyes lock together every now and then, stealing soft smiles from each other every time they cross paths.

The person she met at a common class in their college days was not as different as the person she's painting today. Her lips spill the same poison she remembers, though, yet just like then, it was never directed at Mitsuri. She remembers how people would

label her as fake, yet the person she shares her life with today has always been genuine in her feelings. In fact, it was that honesty that drew them together to begin with.

When it comes to sketching her girlfriend, Mitsuri finishes really quickly. During her crushing days, she'd draw her beloved in different scenarios, outfits, and expressions. It was such a crucial part of her routine; she came to memorize every step in her art progress. The day Shinobu discovered her sketchbook full of doodles of her, she really thought she was done for. Yet she found in her reaction an eagerness to be drawn and painted in a bigger canvas.

Which is why they're here today. This is the third painting of Shinobu Kocho, the woman that stole her heart years ago. An ode to her devoted love and affection for her girlfriend, her partner, her confidant. Each stroke of her pen is as eager as the previous one, her hand moving on her own.

It takes her a few couple minutes to get to the main sketch, and she can see the weariness in her partner's gaze on the other side of the canvas. Mitsuri smiles warmly, her cheeks flushing red at the sight. Dear God, she loves her girlfriend so much.

"The sketch is done, do you want to see it? We can take a break afterwards, dear."

"A break sounds fine," she speaks with a fatigued voice, smiling lazily. "And I want to see." She smiles, walking around the canvas, right behind Mitsuri. Her hands are placed on her shoulders with tenderness, squeezing softly as she leans closer to look at all the details on what's just the first step in her painting process.

She seems speechless for a second, which only worries Mitsuri.

"Is... is everything alright?"

Shinobu snaps out of her stillness, smiling warmly at her. "Dearest, it seems you have improved a lot since the last time. You amaze me."

Mitsuri's cheeks burn red; it's like she can feel steam coming from her face.

In a society well known to be unaccepting, something they tell you about living together with the person you love is that you'll find everything monotonous over time. In their case, however, that couldn't be further from the truth. Every single compliment coming from her girlfriend sends shivers down her spine, almost like electricity running through her veins all the way to her heart. She falls harder and harder for her girlfriend every single day that goes by, and something inside her tells her this already immense love will only grow bigger the more time they spend together.

"Is... is that so?" she speaks softly, her voice high pitched like a squeal.

Shinobu leans closer, her hands sliding down her shoulders to her arms, her chin now teasingly resting on the crook of her neck. Her voice is but a whisper, the feeling of her breath tingling on her ear. Even if she can't see her and make direct eye contact, she can tell how wide her girlfriend's smile is.

"You're such an amazing artist, dear," the artwork speaks with her partner's voice.

It is but the first step of her art process. Not even she can feel such confidence at this point the way her

girlfriend does on her behalf. Each sentence that follows hammers inside her heart, deeper into the core of her soul.

Shinobu's hand gently reaches for hers, the coldness of her skin warming up against her. She can see her short, purple nails gently guiding Mitsuri's hand to turn and hold hers. The touch is so small, almost a second nature to them, yet it feels so intimate. Mitsuri slowly turns her head, their noses touching.

"I remember when I saw one of your paintings long ago," Shinobu whispers with gentleness. "I already had my eyes on you, but your art was what really made me act in the end."

Mitsuri smiles up to her gaze. "Oh?"

"For the longest time, I hoped," she mumbles. "How mutual her feelings are? How does she see me? I wonder if the image of me is near similar how I see her..."

Mitsuri can't help but let out a chuckle. "I wasn't good at hiding that, you know?"

Shinobu's smile is as genuine as ever. "I couldn't help but second-guess myself."

She couldn't help it but laugh at her partner's words. Slowly, Shinobu walks around her, slowly making way to her lap. She sits down comfortably, her arms now surrounding Mitsuri's shoulders. It makes her sigh warmly, it's like she belongs there, like they were truly meant to be. They fit each other perfectly.

Mitsuri's hands gently wrap on her waist, leaving aside all the tools she was holding in her hands. They look at each other in a stretching silence, yet none of them the faintiest bit uncomfortable. It's almost as if they both know what's coming next.

The painting is, now, long forgotten.

With their gaze fixed on each other with a burning fire only they can share, the change of the air surrounding them is almost immediate. It thickens with each passing second as they lean closer and closer, their lips just barely an inch apart now. The delicate, warm tickle of her girlfriend's breath makes her smile gently before claiming her beloved as her own.

She'll never get over this, ever. As they deepen the kiss, Mitsuri quickly notices her heart beats quickly just like the first time. It's all so new, yet so part of their routine. The sweet, honeyed flavor of her girlfriend's lips, the soft and mellow feeling of their bodies pressing together, their hands moving across to get a grasp of the reality of everything.

Belonging somewhere, in the arms of their partner, never felt as real as today.

There's almost an electric tension between them, something that didn't fade in all these years. Even in the midst of their routine, there's so much yet to discover and learn. Like, for example, nowadays she found a liking to carefully place a hand on Shinobu's nape to pull her impossibly closer, which is a gesture well received by her girlfriend, who sighs warmly in response.

Dear God, they could do this for hours. At least Mitsuri can easily keep it going for more than just fleeting minutes. Yet, deep inside, she knows there's the rest of the day ahead, and they can't get lost in each other. She gently nudges Shinobu, who perks up at her touch.

They break the kiss with a gentle chuckle, Mitsuri's hand quickly tucks a strand of hair messily adorning her face. Her thumb gently touches Shinobu's forehead, her fingers running through the silky strands that fall like ink down her shoulders. She tilts her head but slightly before cupping her girlfriend's face.

Her girlfriend's cheeks are tinted the most beautiful shade of pink, and her lips are slightly parted, the air between them warms further with their ragged breaths. The sight is nothing short from addictive to her eyes. Oh, well. She can't say she tried to focus on the task at hand. Mitsuri slowly presses her girlfriend's sides with her thumbs.

"Should we take a break from the painting?" she musters.

Shinobu offers a teasing smile in return. "I believe the painting can wait a little."

The Stars Will Remain Here

By Kyaurum

Shinobu wasn't very fond of big social gatherings. She found them quite inconvenient at best and incredibly frustrating at worst. But Kanae asked her to come along this time because if she wanted to be a demon slayer, she would need to learn more about the organization. Of course, Shinobu scoffed at the notion–she knew plenty already, and she doubted that there would be anything of substance to learn at a meeting. She could learn people's names and faces from a distance, and it was harder for her to keep track of each individual and their idiosyncrasies when there were so many. But, alas.

The corps were rarely called to assemble all at the same time, but with the recent surge in wisteria growth, it would be safer than usual. Shinobu doubted any demons would try to attack in tandem even if they knew the location. Wisteria this early in the season was surprising, and it was most potent right after the flowers emerged from the bud. Shinobu made a mental note to study that later.

The master, Ubayashiki, was discussing something with the five hashira. The last time Kanae discussed it

with Shinobu, she mentioned only four pillars, including herself. Even though she had never spoken to the others directly, Rengoku, Uzui, and Himejima were all very distinct individuals. The one she didn't have any clue about had short, white hair and a nasty-looking scar across his face. He wasn't showing even a hint of decorum towards the master, and Kanae, usually so good-natured, seemed to be losing her patience.

Shinobu continued to look around. It seemed as if the only attendees were the pillars, their tsuguko, and a few others connected to former hashira as well. If she remembered correctly, the one guy around her age wearing a split-pattern haori was trained under the retired water hashira.

Even though she had only turned 14 recently, Shinobu had seen too much carnage and horror to consider herself a child, or even a teenager. It was a pervasive theme for demon slayers; they usually joined after a demon had ruined their life. They didn't usually get to finish childhood before they were forced into maturity, knowing man-eating monsters were living among them. Even the most cheerful slayers, like Rengoku, still had darkness in their eyes, and a sort of haunted presence that normal people tried to stay away from.

And that's why an unfamiliar figure caught Shinobu's eye.

A girl, maybe a year or so older than herself, was standing across the wisteria-laden courtyard. Her hair was dark at the bottom of her braids–three braids, really? Shinobu usually saw only one or two in a hairstyle–but green up until around her temples, where it was pink. She was fidgeting anxiously with the tips of

her hair, and she kept her gaze on the pillars. No, one hashira in particular: Rengoku. Ah, so she was his tsuguko, probably. She didn't seem like she would use flame breathing, though.

Her hair, or the fact that she was likely a tsuguko, or her nervous mannerisms wasn't why she caught Shinobu's eye. It was because she had no morose aura, no semblance of innocence lost. Even if she was older than Shinobu, she seemed less mature. So why was she in the Corps?

Shinobu did her best to not assume things. Many folks had a way of covering up their inner demons. But even then, she was usually able to sense the shared trauma slayers had. It annoyed her that this girl didn't have it. Why would she be here if she hadn't seen what demons were capable of?

Another thing Shinobu didn't pick up on earlier: the girl's uniform was clearly not fitted to support her bust. She felt a twinge of sympathy; she had heard from Kanae about a certain kakushi who tried to make female corps members' uniforms into a display of sorts.

Kanae was approaching from the corner of Shinobu's eye. She pivoted, noticing that the hashira had disbanded from their conversation with the master, save for the newest addition to their ranks. Rengoku had his usual grin on, heading towards the girl and confirming Shinobu's suspicion.

"Hey, little sis. Are you ready for training?" Kanae was smiling, and Shinobu's judgments quickly faded.

"Training? I thought you said this was an informational meet-up to discuss strategy due to a

higher frequency of demon sightings, paired with the early blossom of wi-"

"Regardless of what it's called, it's training... mostly." Kanae ruffled Shinobu's hair affectionately. "We have a new hashira to initiate, and Master Ubayashiki wants promising corps cadets to be prepared for the future."

"That guy already killed a member of the twelve Kizuki?"

"I think I've reminded you enough times to not judge someone based on their appearance or first impression," Kanae gently chided. "Now, get ready, okay?"

Shinobu nodded, hoping she would get a chance to talk with the master about her new idea.

Even after a session led by Kanae, Shinobu was still certain flower breathing wasn't working for her. She wished it would. She looked up to her sister so much, and she wished to even be a fraction of the hero Kanae was. But flower breathing didn't sit right in Shinobu's lungs. She was even close to doing a general total concentration; she just could never land one of the forms.

Luckily, with Kanae by her side, she didn't have to worry when that went awry. Shinobu had tried time and time again to focus as much as she could and swing her blade through a demon's neck. And she definitely could irritate them or slow them down, but she never managed to actually kill one. The conventional method didn't work for her. But she was plenty agile enough to

keep herself and others out of the way until Kanae delivered a final blow.

That's why she hoped her new idea would work. Demons avoided wisteria–it was a poison to them. What if slayers used that to their advantage? It wasn't much different than a mukade centipede, or any other poisonous insect. They wouldn't be able to kill a predator with brute force, but the venom they carried made them mighty in the face of any enemy.

The wisteria that grew around Butterfly Mansion wouldn't just attract its namesake. Honey bees, fruit flies, and beetles would visit the flowers, too. Shinobu admired them. She hoped Kanae's support would be enough to develop new techniques, though.

Shinobu glanced around, realizing that she had lost herself in her own thoughts. Almost everyone had left the area, and she noticed it was around lunchtime. Wooden training swords were left on the ground, ready to collect dust. Only one figure was still in her view, the same one that caught Shinobu's attention earlier.

The girl turned around sharply, seeming to notice someone's gaze on her. She seemed a bit startled at first, but she gave Shinobu a tight smile before grabbing her own katana from the ground, then running off. And Shinobu still couldn't seem to understand why such a carefree aura surrounded that girl. She was diligent; Shinobu had watched her moves as Kanae went over more advanced techniques for tsuguko to explore. She definitely deserved to be here. But there was still something *off* about her.

And Shinobu's scientific mind was determined to figure it out.

"Delicious! Delicious! Absolutely delicious!"

The flame hashira, Rengoku, was devouring portion after portion of food prepared by Lady Ubayashiki and her children. The chopsticks he held moved so fast that Shinobu could only see their afterimage. Next to him was the strange girl, who seemed to be anxiously tapping rice with her own pair of chopsticks. From what Shinobu could tell, her mannerisms indicated she was hungry, but she had only had one bowl of tonkatsu and rice. Even Kanae and Shinobu, with their smaller physiques, had gone back for seconds.

Shinobu averted her gaze back down to her second helping, this time of udon noodles. Not a second later, the girl glanced across the table, the movement of her braids visible in Shinobu's periphery. However, she must've turned back. Her words were soft against the noise of everyone else dining, but Shinobu focused on them.

"Are you sure it's okay for us to eat all this?"

Shinobu hastily slurped up another noodle, not wanting to seem too engrossed in her quasi-espionage.

"Delicious! Such delicious noodles. Of course it's okay, Kanroji. This world has enough for all humans. The problem is that we don't always share it enough. But Japan has plenty for all of us!"

Kanroji. That was her name.

"Okay…" she–Kanroji mumbled. But she still hesitated before eating a little more of what was in front of her.

In a few minutes, everyone had finished their lunch–or at least, they said they did. The hashira were off to do something on their own, probably with the new one. The rest of them were left for solo training.

There were only a handful of non-hashira, less than a dozen. Besides herself and Kanroji, Shinobu counted the retired Urokodaki's best acolyte, another peer trying to form his own breathing style (did it have something to do with the snake wrapped around his neck?), and a few others. But they all seemed to want to keep to themselves.

Shinobu looked around, hoping to find a member of the Ubayashiki family so she could ask where the master was. But everyone had slowly disappeared while Shinobu was taking inventory of them. Back to their own quarters, perhaps. Some would be resting, others practicing or studying.

It was a perfect time to talk to the strange girl, Kanroji.

Shinobu remembered she had sat next to Rengoku, so she had probably exited from the door on that end of the room. She dashed over, slightly impatient but not wanting to show it. Once out of the dining room, she saw that the nearest entrance outside had been left ajar.

Outdoors, it was raining slightly. Normally, Shinobu would've been irked if she was getting her hair wet, but she was too focused to care. She wanted to find Kanroji, see what made her tick.

From the woods, the end of a sheath pointed out, leather glinting with raindrops. As Shinobu ran over, she saw that it extended towards a small path. But the sheath was far too long for a normal katana. Now that

she thought about it, the girl already had a curled, leathery band on her side where a sword would typically rest. And the sheath for the plain katana she had picked up wasn't attached to any sort of belt. Did she have an experimental blade?

Fortunately, the weird sheath wasn't too long. A few more steps, and Shinobu found herself in a small clearing, barely any rain making its way through the canopy formed by surrounding trees. Across the way, Kanroji was facing away from Shinobu, holding a long, flexible weapon. So it was a new type! Maybe there was something similar for herself, better suited to her abilities. Not a sword to cut through a head, but to carry poison…

Kanroji hit a branch, and it suddenly fell. As it hit the ground, Shinobu could see it wasn't a small one. It was at least thicker than most demon necks. And the strange girl had cut through it so easily, almost like it was butter.

Shinobu gasped.

Kanroji suddenly turned, yelping a little bit as she saw Shinobu's eyes trained on her. She seemed… embarrassed?

"Sorry! I hope it isn't a problem I'm training here. You look like you'd know all the rules and stuff. Hey, you look like the flower hashira, too. Are you guys related? It would make sense if she taught you all the rules. I–" The girl suddenly clamped her free hand over her mouth. "Sorry! I know I talk a lot. It happens when I'm nervous, or when I'm really excited, or… well, I'm sorry."

"It's not an issue you're training here," Shinobu replied. "At least, not to my knowledge. Yes, Kochou Kanae is my elder sister."

"Wait, so are you, like, also her tsuguko?" Kanroji asked. "I guess it would probably be an easier process than the rest of us. I'm just lucky Rengoku-sensei is so kind!"

Of course Rengoku would pick someone just as exuberant as himself to train. "No, I'm not formally a tsuguko. I'm not… I'm not as good when it comes to application as one."

"Are you sure, Kochou? You seem super smart. And you definitely know so much better about demon's weaknesses! I wish I was half as smart as you!!" The girl smiled.

So, she was very kind and sweet, as well as bubbly. But she also seemed tired now. Shinobu noticed her lips were cracked.

"You're not eating enough, are you?"

"Huh?!" Kanroji yelled. "No, I'm eating the normal amount! Plus, I'm a girl. I eat the normal amount for girls. I'm definitely eating enough–"

Shinobu walked forward, cutting her off. "You're a demon slayer, and obviously incredibly strong. I don't even know if Kanae could lop off a thick branch like that, not to mention with a specialized katana. The more someone exercises and exerts their body, the more they need to eat." She scoffed a little before realizing how harshed she sounded. With a slight grin, she met Kanroji's gaze again. "It's simple science."

"But really, I think I would eat too much if I didn't stop myself."

"Has Rengoku ever said anything about it?"

"No, but–"

"No buts. Eat what you need."

"But I'm already so… I don't know, over the top? High energy?" Kanroji gestured frantically. "And this is when I feel a little fatigued! I don't think this is what I should do, Kochou…"

"If you want to be capable of slaying demons, you'll need to take care of yourself." Shinobu walked a little closer, laying a hand gently on Kanroji's forearm. "And you don't need to call me Kochou. Just Shinobu."

"Shinobu, wow, that's such a pretty and unique name!" Kanroji gushed in response. "I'm Kanroji Mitsuri, and I think it's only fair if you use my given name if I'm using yours."

Shinobu chuckled a little. "Alright, Mitsuri. Just remember, you don't need to hide your strength, or who you really are. We're all pretty weird here in the demon slayer corps. No ordinary person could survive this." And that reminded her, she didn't have the same haunted aura. "What brought you here?"

"I wanted to try and find a suitable husband, because that's what was expected of me. My mom said I needed to find someone stronger than myself, though." Mitsuri chuckled. "And almost any guy I met didn't want to be around some super-strong freak woman. I joined the corps in hopes of finding someone like that."

She joined… just to find love? Not driven by grief or despair, or even a family tradition?

Mitsuri must've noticed Shinobu's eyes widen. "I know, I know, it sounds really bad when I put it like that. But that's what drove me to join. Now that I'm here,

though, I think I've been doing my best to find myself." She smiled warmly at Shinobu. Something resonated within herself.

It wasn't that she didn't have sadness. It was that she wasn't letting that motivate her.

"You seem like an awesome friend Ko- Shinobu!! I'll see you later, okay? I don't wanna hit you with the Nicchirin Whip."

"Alright, then. But one more thing."

"What is it?"

"You don't have to ever dilute yourself, Mitsuri." Shinobu gazed into her eyes again. "Don't water yourself down. Everyone else can choke."

At dinner, Mitsuri had several different dishes, and her used plates stacked even higher than Rengoku's. It made sense that she felt that she ate too much, but Shinobu knew that there was no need for her to invalidate herself.

"...and Aoi told the crow that Kanao's even tried out a few different hair styles. I think she likes the original side ponytail the most, though." Kanae noticed Shinobu's watchfulness. "Also, Kanao said she wants to travel to the British Raj. And Aoi is planning on moving to the States, maybe try to assassinate another president. And–"

"I get it, I get it!" Shinobu laughed a little. "I'm not paying full attention. Something about Kanao's hair."

Kanae smiled. "Someone's got you very distracted, I see."

Shinobu looked up. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you're spending all your time staring at Kanroji, Rengoku's tsuguko. Aw, does my little sister have a crush?"

"I– What– Can girls even be allowed to like other girls? But no, I don't have a crush!" Shinobu wished she was able to repress her fluster.

"Of course girls can like other girls. It's not common, and many people think it's weird. But there's a lot of weirdos here in the demon slayer corps. I've heard of two men or two women being together before. It's not impossible."

"Huh." Shinobu lost her train of thought, realizing that there were alternatives to her never being interested in guys. "But wait, aren't there people that aren't interested in anyone?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if there's that, too. But, hey, don't worry, Shinobu. It's okay, whoever you like or don't like. I'm always going to be there for you, okay?"

Shinobu smiled and nodded. She was so grateful her older sister watched over her.

The stars were bright outside. Shinobu could see all sorts of patterns, maybe even constellations. A few

moths swirled around the lamp she brought out, and she could see fireflies and honey bees around the wisteria blooms.

The master wasn't surprised with Shinobu's idea. After all, new breathing styles had been created before. But the poison alternative was new. Nevertheless, he agreed her research skills would be the best fit for it, and he'd get a swordsmith working on a custom katana as soon as he could.

"Shinobu!" a voice called out a few paces away. "Is that you?"

She turned and saw Mitsuri running towards her, but she stopped once she saw some of the pollinators near the flowers. "Ooh, bees! I love those little guys. I've wanted to learn how to take care of them so I could have fresh honey every day!"

Shinobu smiled. "I'm fond of all insects, including bees."

"Wait, all of them? Even giant centipedes–" Mitsuri stopped upon seeing the mukade crawling over Shinobu's hand. "OH NO!!"

"This one won't hurt me, don't worry," Shinobu responded. "I'm studying it, anyway."

"Wait, for what?" Mitsuri sat down beside Shinobu, on the other side of the centipede.

"My new breathing style. I'm not going to rely on force. You know how demons avoid wisteria?"

"Yeah? So you're gonna–you're gonna use it like a bug uses poison?"

"You're very intelligent too, Mitsuri. You need to give yourself more grace." Shinobu gazed at Mitsuri. "Yes, I'm going to practice like an insect does. I'm not strong enough to cut off a demon's head, but I'll still slay them."

"Wow! That's so creative! Wait, does that mean anyone can make their own breathing style? I'd love to make my own! I don't know what I'd do, though..."

"You seem to love a lot of things, don't you?" Shinobu giggled.

"You laugh, but maybe that's it! I have a lot of love. That's what life's for, right?" Mitsuri smiled. "I also love stargazing. I'm happy you're out here too, Shinobu."

She put her centipede aside, watching it scurry off back to the woods. "I'm glad you're here as well."

And they stayed out that night, pointing out the stars, next to each other to keep warm against the cool night air. Shinobu never said it, but she agreed. Life wasn't for grieving, or being sad. Of course, that was part of it. But life was for love, like Mitsuri said. There was no point of letting hatred drive her, even when demons would take the most important people in her life away.

She wasn't a demon slayer for revenge. She was making the world a better place, alongside her comrades. She was doing it out of love.

MERMAID BIOLOGY
SHENBUG

@tar-pit_

The Panini Press

By Breebly

Moderator Notes: This story includes non-sexual anatomy and discussion of similar topics, specifically in the context of a mammogram test. While the content is not used in any sexual manner, we understand it can still be sensitive to some.

University has an extraordinary power to transform any topic, no matter how beloved, into a source of agony. Mitsuri had gone in starry-eyed, believing that her art would bring happiness to others, but after a year of assignments, deadlines, and tuition payments, she now sought any excuse for a break from the onslaught of schoolwork. Her favorite, most cherished excuse was spending time with Shinobu, whom she sat across from in a restaurant while complaining, "Art school is a sham! No, that's not true. Maybe it's me who's the sham. When I see everyone around me making incredible things, I feel like I don't belong, like I'm nowhere near their level. Maybe I'm an idiot after all."

"You're not an idiot. You're strong, kind, and smart."

There was always a unique giddiness that came only from being with Shinobu, and Mitsuri blushed

pleasantly and gushed, "Aww, Shinobu! Who needs to be smart when I have big boobs?"

"Oh... um..."

"Speaking of boobs, I gotta accompany my mom to her mammogram. She's going to a new clinic, and she gets lost easily." It was from this clinic that Mitsuri and her mom later departed with the gift of a folder given to new patients, and then they were home with evening settling over the Kanroji family.

Mitsuri lounged in the living room, not wanting to study while also feeling guilty for not studying, and she looked anxiously around herself until her gaze landed on the folder. Her mind immediately accepted the distraction, and she leafed through the papers and then stopped at a page portraying bare breasts because everyone stops when there're titties in sight. It was instructions for a breast self-exam, and she read and reread it, finding that there was repeated emphasis on the significance of abnormal masses. With a slight fear creeping over her, she hurried into her room, palpated herself as instructed, and discovered, to her horror, that her breasts were indeed uneven. After that she barely slept through the night, and when morning came, she felt too embarrassed to ask her mom for advice. Classes passed by in an uneasy blur, and when Mitsuri could no longer stand the anxiety, she decided she'd take the initiative to call and schedule a mammogram, only to be hindered by a question from the receptionist: "Do you have a referral from your doctor?"

"Uh... no? Do I need that?"

"Usually, insurance requires it."

"How much is it without insurance?" After hearing the price and completing the call, Mitsuri dialed her number one shoulder to cry on. "Shinobu! I tried scheduling a mammogram for myself, but they said insurance won't cover it without a doctor's note! I'm in school; I don't have money for the doctor or to pay full price! What should I do?!"

Shinobu was utterly dumbfounded, but her voice was as even as ever: "Why're you trying to get a mammogram?"

"My bibingans are lumpy bumpy!"

"Of course they are. Mine are too. That's their natural structure. What you're supposed to be looking for is new or unusual lumps."

"I still want an exam just in case. Do you think there're other clinics that don't need a referral for insurance?"

"Nowhere will insurance cover you because you're too young for it to count as preventative care, and you don't have any indicators that it's medically necessary."

"There's gotta be low-cost clinics out there."

"Mitsuri. You're not hearing me. You don't need a mammogram. This is just the stress of school getting to you and making you worry about nonsense." Shinobu failed to dissuade her over the phone, so soon she was following Mitsuri while saying, "I'm not letting you go alone because this seems dangerous. Why're you set on doing this?"

"Because these puppies are the key to my future if

school doesn't work out." Mitsuri emphasized her chest with both hands and said secretively, "What I really want is for someone to take care of me, someone who's a breadwinner and who'll appreciate my cooking, my art, and my chichis."

Shinobu raised her eyebrows briefly, and then an idea seemed to cross her mind as she said coolly, "You know mammograms hurt, right?"

"Isn't it like an x-ray?"

"Sort of. The machine is overhead, and you sandwich one boob at a time between two plates."

Mitsuri gasped loudly and fearfully. "Like a hydraulic press?!"

"No that's too extreme! More like... a panini press. Is that what you want, to squish your biscuits into paninis?"

Mitsuri's mouth hung open in fright before she regained her wits. "I know what you're doing. Don't try to scare me off. We're here anyway."

It took all Shinobu's strength to keep from shouting, so her voice was pleasant but strained: "This is a McDonald's."

"I guess they need to keep costs low for patients, so this is cheaper than a proper office."

"You're not getting a mammogram at McDonald's."

"I am! I'm going in right now!" Mitsuri went to the counter and said to the bewildered cashier, "Hi, I have an appointment for a mammogram."

Shinobu rushed in, grabbed Mitsuri, and endeavored to drag her away, and Mitsuri resisted until a man stood from a table and said, "Kanroji? Nice to meet you. I'm your doctor, Douma." She readily warmed to him, and when she wasn't looking, he slipped the restaurant manager a bill. Shinobu, however, saw it, and she tugged Mitsuri's arm, trying to warn her, as he guided them to a back room and inquired, "Who's this with you?"

Shinobu could've sworn that she knew him from somewhere, and as she racked her mind trying to recall where, she lied, "I'm her wife."

Mitsuri glanced at her in surprise without saying anything, but when Douma handed the patient paperwork and then turned away to get set up, she texted Shinobu, "Why'd you say you're my wife?"

"Because then he can't deny me entry."

Despite this, Douma commanded that Shinobu wait at the restaurant's front, and when she argued back, he smiled condescendingly and explained, "Unfortunately, same-sex marriage carries no legal weight in our country, and you don't have power of attorney." She had no rebuttal, and she could do nothing except watch and seethe as he gave an annoying little wave before disappearing around the corner.

Mitsuri meanwhile stood uneasily because she was now wearing nothing except her shoes and a medical gown, and she was further unnerved when the manager appeared and asked to speak with Douma, who requested her patience while he stepped away. Mitsuri, who found comfort in food, thought it'd soothe her if she had something to eat while she waited, so she texted

Shinobu, who was absorbed by a spectacle outside the windows of two hooligans having a fistfight. Shinobu snapped back to reality when her phone vibrated, and alongside Mitsuri's text that read, "Could I give you my card to buy me the 40 nuggies? 🥺" there was also a missed text from Kanae that triggered a memory for Shinobu, allowing her to finally recall who the "doctor" was.

She hastened to the back, where Mitsuri cheerfully held out her card, which Shinobu ignored to exclaim, "We're leaving now! This guy is a quack. He looked familiar to me, and I remembered why: he nearly scammed Hashibira's granny and Kanae."

"Huh?! Who's Hashibira?!"

"The piggy boy in that documentary from a few years ago! He and Kanao chased this guy off because he was trying to rob people."

Mitsuri looked confused and doubtful, and Shinobu asked flatly, "Why're you naked?"

"He told me to change into this."

"The gowns for mammograms open in the front, and they're shirt-length. Why would he give you a full-length gown that opens in the back? What happens when it's time to whip the twins out?" Shinobu sighed, took Mitsuri's hand, and led her around to see the "doctor's" laptop screen, which displayed views from multiple cameras hidden throughout the room, and a series of emotions showed over Mitsuri's face: shock, hurt, and then rage.

Douma was a fool to re-enter the room. He barely

dodged a projectile that shattered against the wall, and upon looking down, it was his laptop that was in pieces. Mitsuri snarled, "I had a feeling that you were lying. Robbing the elderly and exploiting students? You're dead!" He scrambled to flee, but something massive crashed through and collapsed the wall, blocking his path. She'd hurled the desk, and Shinobu watched in horrified admiration as Mitsuri's muscles flexed, allowing her to tear a pipe free with her bare hands and launch it at Douma like a javelin. She narrowly missed, and the manager appeared in response to the commotion, only to find that one woman's destructive fury was threatening to demolish the building. He opened his mouth to protest and promptly lost consciousness and several teeth via a chair thrown by Mitsuri, and she hurdled him and vanished to chase Douma.

Shinobu, equally frightened and amazed, had backed into a corner to avoid the chaos, and after the images of Mitsuri's rampage stopped circulating through her head enough that she could think, she gathered Mitsuri's belongings, exited the back room, and was greeted by a scene of utter ruin. The employees were cowering together, and they must've recognized that she was associated with the pink-and-green destroyer because they pointed at something that the manager had dropped: Mitsuri's underpants. Shinobu collected the garment and searched around, and her concerns were quelled when Mitsuri, splattered with blood, reappeared and cried, "I'm sorry, everyone! Please find new jobs somewhere safer. Your manager was conspiring with a sleaze who recorded you in the break and restrooms, but he won't bother you anymore." The employees only took a few seconds to process this news before starting to angrily vandalize and strip the restaurant of anything valuable. Mitsuri meanwhile scooped McNuggets and fries to fill a bag, and then she

took a large cup, went to the soda machine, and asked Shinobu what drink she wanted. Shinobu, rendered speechless, gave an incredulous laugh, and Mitsuri chirped, "Sweet tea then!"

They stepped outside, and maybe it was from finally having some fresh air (or maybe because the wind blew Mitsuri's gown up and exposed her assets) that Shinobu remembered to return the underwear. Mitsuri reddened intensely, quickly donned them, and said, "Sorry you had to touch my gross panties. Sorry for everything. I should've listened to you at the start."

"Don't apologize. That was amazing, and you're a hero. You've saved so many potential victims. And what do you mean your panties are gross? They're as cute as you."

Mitsuri squirmed happily. "You think so?! Even though the elastic is worn and loose, and there're old period stains on them?!"

"You should see mine. They're disgusting."

Mitsuri laughed and said playfully, "I'd love to see them. You know, when I said I wanted a breadwinner who'd take care of me, maybe I was thinking of someone who's an aspiring scientist..."

Shinobu smiled and quirked an eyebrow. "Oh? Someone who'll appreciate your cooking, your art, and your chichis? Someone who'll pick your panties up off the ground for you?"

Mitsuri linked their arms as they walked, and she fed a fry to Shinobu and giggled, "Maybe someone who claimed that they're my wife? Maybe we could work our

way up to that?" She added nervously, "Only if um... the strength thing... isn't too off-putting..."

Shinobu stared seriously into Mitsuri's eyes. "Have you heard of being scaroused? Like being simultaneously scared and—"

Mitsuri interrupted with a cheer at the prospect of getting to forever receive Shinobu's affirmations and affections. "I'm liking the idea of us already! Wait—'like' isn't a strong enough word. I'm *lovin'* it!"

Cute

crisantemo

Credits

kyaurum
Head & Writing Mod

@kyaurum_ @kyaurum

Starsinmytea
Graphics Mod

@StarsinmyT

TheFloralPeach
Art, Merch & Socials Mod

@thefloralpeach

Lemon
Formatting Mod

@lem0n_icecream
@lem0nicecream

Page Artists

Oykodon93
@oykodon93

weeenaku
@weeenaku

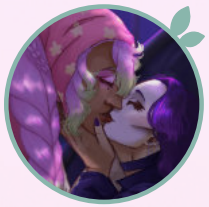
Ren Churro
@renchurro
@ren_churro

Rain
@shangerez

Emmi
@oemmio1
@oemmio

Tanukified
@tanukified

Shenbug
@shenbugart
@shenbug



Tar
@tar_pit_
@tar_pit_twit_

Moh
@mom00ru63

Auritry
@meowsmuse

Ibuki_does_Drawing
@ibuki_does_drawing

Crisantemo
@messy.crisantemo
@messycrisantemo
@messy-crisantemo

Erbezdiez
@erbezdiez

PropertyOfHog
@propertyofhog

Writers

Mimi
"Lazy Morning, Rushed Afternoon"
@gentannies

kyaurum
"The Stars Will Remain Here"
@kyaurum_
@kyaurum

Breebly
"The Panini Press"
@breeebly

Merch Artists

Oykodon93
@oykodon93

Erbezdiez
@erbezdiez

PropertyOfHog
@propertyofhog

Furuitiyo
@furuitiyo

kyaurum
@kyaurum_
@kyaurum